

Wisconsin's Child Protective Services (CPS) System

The purposes of the CPS System are:

- To protect the health, safety and welfare of children by encouraging the reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect;
- To assure that appropriate protective services are provided to abused and neglected children and their families and to protect children from further harm;
- To provide support, counseling and other services to children and their families to ameliorate the effects of child abuse and neglect;
- To promote the well being of the child in his or her home setting, wherever possible, or in another safe and stable placement.

Chapter 48 of Wisconsin's Statutes defines abuse as:

Physical Abuse

Physical injury inflicted on a child by other than accidental means. Physical injury includes, but is not limited to, lacerations, fractured bones, burns, internal injuries, severe or frequent bruising or great bodily harm.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual intercourse or sexual touching of a child, sexual exploitation, forced viewing of sexual activity, or permitting, allowing or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution.

Emotional Damage

Harm to a child's psychological or intellectual functioning which is exhibited by severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal or aggression.

Emotional damage may be demonstrated by substantial and observable changes in behavior, emotional response or learning which are incompatible with the child's age or stage of development.

Neglect

When a parent. . .or caretaker. . .fails, refuses or is unable, for reasons other than poverty, to provide the necessary care, food, clothing, medical or dental care so as to seriously endanger the physical health of the child.

PERSONS REQUIRED TO REPORT ABUSE & NEGLECT: Mandated Reporters

- physicians
- coroners
- medical examiners
- nurses
- dentists
- chiropractors
- acupuncturists
- optometrists
- all medical & mental health professionals
- day care providers
- alcohol and other drug abuse counselors
- marriage & family therapists
- mediators under s. 767.11
- treatment staff employed by or working under contract with a county department
- professional counselors
- physical therapists and physical therapist assistants
- occupational therapists
- dietitians
- speech therapists
- audiologists
- emergency medical technicians
- social or public assistance workers
- paramedics
- school administrators, teachers, counselors
- police and law enforcement officers
- CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate
- child care workers in any day care center, group home or residential care center

Mandated reporters are required to report suspected abuse and neglect of any child they see while in the course of their professional duties. Persons required to report must also report those situations in which they have reason to believe that a child has been threatened with abuse or neglect and that abuse or neglect is likely to occur.

Any other person may report if there is reason to believe that a child has been abused or neglected or has been threatened with abuse or neglect.

PENALTY

Persons required to report and who intentionally fail to report suspected child abuse or neglect may be fined up to \$1,000 or imprisoned for up to 6 months or both.

Persons who report in good faith are immune from civil or criminal liability.

REPORTING IS NOT "MEDDLING"

Deciding to get involved in a situation of suspected abuse or neglect can be difficult. It is, however, a decision that may be crucial to a child not only today, but also in the future. Parents who have abused or neglected their children may need services and support to provide safe care for their children.

HOW TO REPORT

Contact your county social/human services department, sheriff, or local police department immediately - by telephone or in person.

WHAT TO REPORT

Explain as well as you can, what happened or is happening to the child. Describe the nature of the abuse or neglect. Be as specific as possible.

Be prepared to give the name, address, and telephone number of the child and also the name of the parent or caretaker, if different. Even if you do not know all of this information, report what you do know.

Tell all you know about the situation.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

A social worker from the county department of social/human services or an agency under contract with the county department will assess the situation and determine what must be done to protect the child and help the family.

Services available to help the family and the child include counseling, in-home services, assistance or training in home and financial management, parent education and self-help groups. In severe situations, it may be necessary to temporarily place a child in out-of-home care.

A person who is mandated to report suspected child abuse or neglect will be informed by the county what action, if any, was taken to protect the health, safety and welfare of the child who is the subject of the report.

SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

Following are the major signs of physical and sexual abuse, emotional damage and neglect. One of these, or even several in combination, may not indicate that abuse has occurred. They may indicate accidents or that medical conditions, emotional illness or other problems exist. If a number of these signs occur together or if they reoccur frequently, child abuse and neglect may be suspected.

SIGNS OF PHYSICAL ABUSE

- Bruises, welts on face, neck, chest, back
- Injuries in the shape of object (belt, cord)
- Unexplained burns on palms, soles of feet, back
- Fractures that do not fit the story of how an injury occurred
- Delay in seeking medical help
- Extremes in behavior: very aggressive or withdrawn and shy
- Afraid to go home
- Frightened of parents
- Fearful of other adults

SIGNS OF EMOTIONAL DAMAGE

- Low self-esteem
- Self-denigration
- Severe depression
- Aggression
- Withdrawal
- Severe anxiety

SIGNS OF NEGLECT

- Poor hygiene, odor
- Inappropriately dressed for weather
- Needs medical or dental care
- Left alone, unsupervised for long periods
- Failure to thrive, malnutrition
- Constant hunger, begs or steals food
- Extreme willingness to please
- Frequent absence from school
- Arrives early and stays late at school or play areas or other people's homes

SIGNS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

- Pain, swelling or itching in genital area
- Bruises, bleeding, discharge in genital area
- Difficulty walking or sitting, frequent urination, pain
- Stained or bloody underclothing
- Venereal disease
- Refusal to take part in gym or other exercises
- Poor peer relationships
- Unusual interest in sex for age
- Drastic change in school achievement
- Runaway or delinquent
- Regressive or childlike behavior

*It shouldn't hurt
to be a child*



. . . but sometimes it does

Ask Yourself How You Can Help

REPORT CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services
Division of Children and Family Services
Bureau of Programs and Policies

YOU CAN HELP! REPORT CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Immediately contact your county department of social or human services, sheriff, or the local police.

PFS 101 6/04

County Department of Human/Social Services